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**H.E.
Minister of Environment, Forests and Water Administration
Mr. Luftër Xhuvëli
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ALBANIA**

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30th March 2009

Bird Hunting in Albania
A call for urgent improvement

Dear Sir,

Albania is a globally important country for bird preservation. Migrating birds follow the Adriatic Flyway across the East Adriatic Coast towards the Dinarids and need resting and feeding sites during spring and autumn when migrating. Albania offers several valuable resting and feedings sites, e.g. Lake Prespa, Lake Ohrid and Lake Skadar as well as the different riverine estuaries such as the Buna Delta or the Karavastas Lagoon.

The country is also an important wintering area. Other birds, for example Cranes, especially in the course of the recent climate changes, tend to stay in Europe rather than migrating to Africa. Consequently, they need rescue areas in case of cold snaps along the warm Adriatic coast. Albania also offers several of such places in the different deltas and estuaries along the coast.

Unfortunately though, within our analysis of the current situation concerning bird hunting in the different countries along the Adriatic Flyway, Albania was ranked poor.

In our opinion, your country has failed to implement even the minimum European standards in bird preservation and hunting due to many reasons (see below).

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As the current situation in your country is impacting bird populations especially from Central, Northern and Eastern Europe, as well as the breeding populations of numerous species in your country, we urgently ask you to implement the following measures to improve the situation. Bird species such as the Slender-billed Curlew are near to extinction worldwide and therefore in need of urgent changes in hunting laws and nature conservation policies in Albania.

Hunting during the rearing season and the various stages of reproduction

According to the EU Birds Directive, hunting during the rearing season and the various stages of reproduction as still practised in Albania is not allowed. Therefore, please stop bird hunting in August and September.

Hunting during the return to the rearing grounds

Birds start to migrate back to their breeding areas early in the year. According to the Birds Directive, hunting during the birds' return to their breeding grounds is not allowed.

Therefore, please stop bird hunting after January 15th at latest.

Number of Birds Species open for Hunting

In Albania, several bird species are hunted, which are already close to extinction in your country.

Please remove birds such as Gadwal (*A. strepera*), Teal (*A. crecca*), Garganey (*Anas querquedula*) and Shoveler (*Anas clypeata*) from the list of species open for hunting.

In addition, please stop hunting of all species of waders (Charadriiformes) such as Woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*) and Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*) immediately. Not only the fate of the Slender-billed Curlew depends on Albania's action, but also the destiny of other wader species such as Black-tailed Godwit (*L. limosa*).

Please also stop killing of all song birds (Passerines) such as Crested lark (*Galerida cristata*), Sky Lark (*Alauda arvensis*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Mistle Thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) and Fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*).

Number of Birds Hunted

There are no figures on how many birds are hunted each year in Albania.



An annual report will help to prove that hunting in your country does not endanger any bird species in their survival.

Therefore, please publish the data and improve the monitoring of bird hunting.

Hunting Ban Areas

Although Albania has established Hunting Ban Areas, e.g. at Lake Skadar, Karavastas and in the core areas of the Buna Delta, the number of secure stopover and resting sites is insufficient in Albania due to a lack of supervision of the regulations in the specific sites and lacking promotion of their protection status. Other countries are much more advanced in this respect. Switzerland, for example, has protected 18 bird areas of national and 10 of international importance.

We are very pleased about the decision taken in the new Hunting Law of Montenegro which states that the whole coastal estate (morsko dobro) is not considered hunting ground any more.

Please follow these positive example of other countries and, additionally, stop hunting in all important bird areas and resting sites of national and international importance.

Illegal Hunting

Illegal bird hunting is a huge problem in your country! The implementation of the existing hunting law is poor as there are hardly any inspections whether the law is actually being followed. Many hunters ignore any regulations related to bird hunting and even inside natural reserves and strict protected core areas, hunters are shooting regularly.

The situation needs urgent improvement! Therefore, please initiate a broad campaign in your country addressing hunters, police, all kinds of inspection agencies and NGOs to inform them about the high conservation status of many bird species.

Albania is an important country to hold the worldwide loss of biodiversity. We therefore urgently ask you to base your decisions concerning laws and regulations for hunting and protection of birds on the European



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environmental policy and the agreed standards of bird conservation in Europe to help to preserve the biodiversity in your country and in Europe.

EuroNatur is monitoring the improvements of bird hunting in different countries along the Adriatic Flyway, including also Albania. We would be pleased to support you in the improvement of the current situation and in the implementation of all measures necessary for the improvement of bird hunting.

Yours sincerely,

